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Rendering

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examined you, judging your looks. You turned. He was nothing special, not like those French boys that they show on television. He was bespectacled with short smoker's teeth, black hair, and bad skin, which was tainted yellow. I couldn't tell if the color was natural or from the nicotine.

He spoke in rapid French, the kind I was terrified of in my high school French class. I spoke timidly; you couldn't look him in the eyes. "I speak English." Then he switched gears, talking in broken English, asking, "Where are you staying? Who did you come with? Can I stay with you up here?"

Panic set in, and I spat out, "My father will be looking for me soon, so hi and bye."

"Ciao," he replied, confused, as we brushed past.

I couldn't tell them what happened, so we went to the bathroom, and I locked the door. Outside, the sound of a motorcycle growled through the valley. You cringed. I couldn't look at you. I was too ashamed of my cowardice, of my neglect of you. We two, we could have been more than what we were, but my fears restrained us, my fears ensnared us. You were worth more than I could offer. You deserved better. Sick with anger at myself, sick with regret, I propped myself up over the sink and looked in the mirror, and there you were, my husk.

